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CIA needs best leadership New Kensington Daily Dispatch

THE resignation of Adm. William F. Raborn as head of the Central Intelligence Agency hardly can have been quite as routine as President Johnson's off-hand announcement might have suggested.

Criticism of the cloak-and-dagger agency increased under Adm. Raborn, culminating in the demand of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee that it be authorized to participate in overseeing CIA operations.

Opposed especially by Sen. Russell, chairman of the Armed Forces Committee and a principal CIA watchdog, Sen. Fulbright threatened to carry the issue to the Senate floor. Sen. Mansfield, the majority leader, has been trying for a compromise to prevent such a debate. So the White House announcement may have served his purpose.

Perhaps Sen. Fulbright, with whom the President seems to have made at least partial peace, may be satisfied if he deems that the CIA has been put in more responsible hands. But that

As chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee, he has the best of reasons for wanting to be fully informed about the CIA. Far from con-

remains to be seen.

Limiting itself to routine intelligence activities, the agency has plunged into foreign political situations without public authorization of any sort. It has embarrassed American diplomats and even the White House.

It has infuriated some foreign governments and it has given others the opportunity to blame the United States for all manner of untoward developments. Such charges, of course, can be made with impunity against a clandestine agency. Even if denied, the disclaimers are accepted as credible. Thus there is serious risk that American foreign policy may be frustrated.

Even worse for a democracy is the possibility that secret agents may involve the nation in misunderstandings and hostilities without the knowledge of Congress and the Administration.

Perhaps the United States would be better off if the "conspiracy" approach to foreign affairs were abandoned. But so long as it is deemed necessary, the work of the CIA should be conducted with the utmost discretion and responsibility — and under adequate official, if not public scrutiny.